

Horace N. Allen: Missions, Expansionism, Structural Holes, and Social Capital

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Abstract

To date, only two scholars (historians) have attempted to research thoroughly the Horace N. Allen Manuscripts (MSS) regarding the first American resident missionary in Korea. This paper makes an important contribution because, to my knowledge, no study has perused the entire Allen MSS and woven a single theme that connects Allen's actions in both Korea and Hawaii. Research on the development of Protestantism in Korea can be generally separated via religious and non-religious factors. In this paper, I emphasize how socio-historic contexts, expansionism, and various missionary activities allowed Allen to fill structural holes and employ social capital for personal and national advancements. I argue that Allen's social connections facilitated America's missionary and expansionistic endeavors in Korea and Hawaii at the turn of the 20th century.

There is no shortage of scholarship regarding Horace N. Allen (1858-1923) and the burgeoning of Protestantism in Korea at the turn of the twentieth century. Some missionaries (e.g., Appenzeller, 1905; Hulbert, 1969 [1909]; Zwemer & Brown, 1908; Underwood, 1908; Brown, 1919; Clark, 1921 and 1930; Hall, 1978) who were in Korea during the same time frame as Allen over-emphasized the religious factors in explaining the growth of Protestantism. These works focused on the evangelistic nature of the missionaries' work; Protestant growth was a spiritual enterprise. In contrast, other scholars (Namkung, 1928, p. 8; Deuchler, 1977; Hunt, Jr., 1980, p. 3; Carter et al., 1990, p. 249; Lee, 2001) have employed non-religious heuristics whereby Protestantism served as a boundary marker against China and Japan and became associated with progress and hope (Westernization). Though some socio-historic (ethno-religious) studies have entailed the development of Protestantism at the turn of the twentieth century, the research was done without investigating the Allen Papers (MSS). For example, Young-Shin Park (2000, p. 507) associated Protestant developments with modernization and reactive ethnicity whereby Protestantism served as an anti-Japanese marker. Danielle Kane and Jung Mee Park (2009, pp. 366 and 368) employed a comparative analysis regarding "the puzzle of Christian success in Korea" and found a solution via geopolitical theory. Geopolitical theory was used as a heuristic and intersected with the concept of networks to explain why Protestantism grew in Korea but not in Japan or China. Andrew Kim (2000, p. 129) claimed "the dramatic growth of Protestantism in South Korea during

the 1960s, 70s, and 80s was due in part to the way certain doctrines and practices of the imported faith agreed with those of the folk tradition." Whether one agrees with his premise that American Protestants at the turn of the 20th century had doctrines that were readily compatible with Korea's indigenous religious beliefs may be a theological matter. Further, the contexts of reception and growth for Protestantism were not under the same conditions; there is a difference of one hundred years from 1880 to 1980. I have delimited this paper with a socio-historic analysis (primarily) on the Allen MSS. There is a huge gap in the literature regarding Horace N. Allen, who claimed that as a medical doctor he opened "the mission work in Korea" (Allen, H. N., 1883-1923, Allen to Rev. Josiah Strong D. D., August 30, 1888). No scholar questions that he was the first American Protestant resident missionary in Korea. Yet, depending on the source, he has been depicted as a medical missionary, a diplomat (proponent of American business), or both. According to the Yonsei University website (<http://www.yonsei.ac.kr/eng/about/history/-chronicle/>), Allen was crucial regarding "not only the birth of Yonsei University, but also the starting point of modern medical education in Korea and among the first in Asia." Yonsei University has become one of the elite medical universities in South Korea. Allen's tenure in Korea entailed going from China to Korea in 1884; leaving the mission field to become a court doctor and "unofficial" advisor to the Korean government and going to the U.S. with a Korean delegation in 1887; returning to Korea in 1890 as a missionary and "almost immediately" becoming the Secretary of the American Legation; becoming the U.S. Minister in 1897; and being recalled in 1905 (Allen, H. N., 1883-1923, n.d.). It appears that only two scholars (historians) have mined the Allen MSS in depth. Fred Harrington (1980) has done the best work regarding Allen and concessions in Korea. Wayne Patterson (1988; 2000; 2003) is the most significant scholar regarding Allen and Korean laborers in Hawaii. Although both Harrington and Patterson provided the only extensive treatment of the Allen MSS, they seemed to depict two different Horace Allens; one who was involved in Korea and one who was involved in Hawaii. What I show in this paper is that America's interests in both expansionism and missions provided Allen the opportunities to be involved in Korea and Hawaii; under conditions of either expansionism or missions, Allen would not

have had the same efficacy regarding concessions, the development of Christianity, and the illegal transfer of Korean laborers to Hawaii. I employ a socio-historic analysis by engaging primarily with the Allen MSS. I will argue that Allen was in a particular context of U.S. missions and expansionism, that he filled a structural hole (Allen became a nexus between various interests in the U.S., Korea, and Hawaii), and employed social capital for personal and national advancements.

Issue

[Vol. 3 No. 1 \(2013\): Journal for the Sociological Integration of Religion and Society](#)

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